

8 June 1966

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MEMORANDUM FOR THE RECORD

SUBJECT: New Cuban Anti-US Campaign Likely

1. Washington has given the Castro regime a perfect issue to exploit, portraying the US as the "imperialist strangler" of Cuba.

2. Washington's apparent refusal to authorize the Cubans to send their athletes to Puerto Rico for the upcoming Caribbean Games on a Cuban vessel plays directly into Fidel Castro's hands. He probably will launch another propaganda barrage designed to appeal to his domestic and foreign audiences. By trotting out the US "bogeyman" at home he will hope further to divert the Cuban people from their day-to-day difficulties. Castro will also have a good case with which to impress other underdeveloped nations that the US talks about justice and democracy but in fact violates international rules whenever it sees fit.

3. Foreign Minister Raul Roa requested US authorization to transport Cuba's athletes to Puerto Rico by boat on 1 June, after the US--after considerable footdragging--had permitted the issuance of visas to the Cuban participants and athletic officials. Washington delayed answering the Cuban note until the afternoon of 7 June.

Technically, by issuing visas for the Cubans to travel to Puerto Rico, the US lived up to its agreement to forego Cold War considerations when international Olympic matters are involved. However, the logical conclusion has to be that the US never intended to permit the Cubans to participate in the Caribbean Games. Over 400 Cubans were scheduled to go to Puerto Rico; taking them by boat would seem to be the most efficient means of travel.

4. The Cubans have been training their athletes for the Caribbean Games for over one year. It was acknowledged that the Cubans were sending a strong contingent and would have given a very good account of themselves--probably walking off with many honors. Coverage of the preparations for the Games has been extensive in the Cuban press.

State Department review completed

5. Castro will have a strong moral and legal case against the US if Washington prevents the Cubans from flying their athletes to Puerto Rico--a distinct possibility. This petty, childish action on the part of Washington, in the name of the US policy of "isolating" Cuba will probably cause many more headaches than if the Cubans would have been allowed to participate. At the very least, it is likely that some of the Cuban athletes would have defected while in Puerto Rico, which the US could have exploited in its propaganda broadcasts to Cuba and the rest of the world.

6. Washington's action seems particularly implausible in light of its decision of a few years ago to permit East German athletes to come to Squaw Valley, Idaho to participate in the Winter Olympic Games.

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